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In regard to the trial of ecclesiastical persons, "it was recognized for the first time in Stephen's charter of 1136, that spiritual persons, including inferior clerks, should be amenable only to ecclesiastical courts." These concessions Henry II. refused to ratify, and desired to go back to the earlier customs of Henry I. and William. Hence the struggle with Becket over the Constitutions of Clarendon. Out of this privilege arose 'benefit of clergy,' extended to all persons who could read, and then, under James I., given to women, when it came to mean a mere mitigation of punishment (usually the death penalty) in certain cases called 'clergyable offences.'

The work concludes with a valuable presentation of the condition of the Church at the present time, showing how the ecclesiastical courts have gradually, in the present century, lost most of their competence in civil cases until it has been finally abolished in regard to all important matters. The present courts with their names and functions are briefly but accurately described.

CHARLES L. WELLS.

*History of England under Henry the Fourth.* By JAMES HAMILTON WYLIE, M.A. Vol. III., 1407-1410. (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co. 1896. Pp. xi, 482.)

MR. WYLIE'S work has grown under his hand in a way with which we can all sympathize, even though we may demur. When the first volume was published, it was announced as one of two volumes; the second, when it appeared, was prefaced by the statement that a third would be necessary; and now in the third we have the same announcement for an additional fourth volume. This third instalment covers the years from 1407 to 1410, inclusive, recounting the progress of the great Schism, of the war between England and France, and of the Lollard agitation; the actions of the king, the council, and parliament during these years; with special chapters on the gilds, and the Hussite quarrels at Prague. More than in either of the preceding volumes is one impressed with the fact that the length of the work is somewhat disproportionate to the importance of its subject; and yet it is by no means immediately apparent how this is so. Few, if any, of the usual evidences of "padding" are visible. The matter of which the book is composed is solid information; it is drawn from original sources; it is to a great extent new. Moreover, the work has excellences that are even more unusual than these. It is broad in its interests. Matters of state and matters of church, events in the political and military, in the economic and social world, are given in great detail. Again, in contrast with most English histories written by Englishmen, it is quite free from insular narrowness. The affairs of the Continent are described wherever they touch the interests of England, and are discussed for their own sake as well as for the sake of that connection. Especially in this third volume, the great Schism and the attempts to close it, the intrigues of the French political parties headed by the dukes of Burgundy and Orleans,

and the Bohemian religious struggles are given an attention almost disproportionate to that bestowed on more purely English affairs. Of the latter it is hard to pick out any special subjects as those on which Mr. Wylie has given the most light. Perhaps the account of archbishop Arundel's efforts to crush out the recrudescing Lollardism of Oxford, and the description of the gilds are of the most considerable originality and significance. His method gives an impression rather of fulness of detail than of added clearness.

In fact, it is just here that we are most inclined to criticise the work adversely. It is rather a cyclopædia of historic facts, names, and dates, during the period from 1399 to 1410, than a real history of that period. In the first place, history should involve a selection of facts, not an inclusion of all possible facts. For instance, in one paragraph, on pages 317 and 318, seventeen names are casually mentioned as places where the king stayed successively between April 3, 1410, and the end of the year; the naming of each of these places necessitating separate and frequently multiple references, mostly to the patent and close rolls. Again, a description of the bitter weather during the campaign of Bramham Moor leads to more than two pages of references to the similar severity of the weather in ten or twelve different countries of Europe. This fondness for purely antiquarian lore shows itself especially in the footnotes. Over and over again we have masses of genealogical detail about obscure individuals, references to a dozen different ways of spelling unimportant proper names, lists of brasses in churches where a certain type of ladies' head-dress can be seen, quotations from contemporary writers mentioning peculiar musical instruments, or garments, or stuffs, or weapons, or foods. It is this that accounts largely for the overgrown footnotes, which fill on the average through the volume nearly, if not quite, one-half of each page. The books and documents referred to are not unworthy sources. They are in almost all cases contemporary and reasonably trustworthy; but the thousand and one details to which these references are given are, relatively speaking, insignificant and inapposite, so that their inclusion leads not to a clearer and stronger impression, but to turgidity and an appearance of pedantry. A serious author is bound to make it possible for a student to follow the road he has gone among his authorities; he is not bound, indeed he is bound not to record every step of his way, nor to reproduce all the contents of his note-books.

Secondly, the main stream of an historical narrative ought certainly to flow in refined literary language. Mr. Wylie has made this impossible for himself by his habit of constant quotation of single words or expressions, used, it is true, at the time or in the documents from which he is drawing, but neither understood, admired, nor acknowledged in modern English. For instance, in his discussion of the religious gilds he says: "They were in fact the average work-a-day Englishman's answer to profanity and sacrilege, and for every impious misbeliever who ate the consecrated bread with onions and oysters for supper, or cropped off the nose of a Blessed Virgin

in a church, or hacked up an old St. Catherine for fuel to seethe his worts, thousands of honest souls, not especially devout or pious, joined the gilds in practical protest against the misty and unsavoury cobwebs of the Wycliffists and Lollers." "The brethren did not put in their weekly shot merely to dole groats to pittancers, or help the bedrid and brokelegged, or find poor scholars to school, or dower poor girls, or burn their soul-candles around the corpse of a dead brother, or follow at his forthbringing and 'terment." Or when he describes Oxford: "So Solomon studied with his cup and his strumpets, and romped with hawks and hounds and revel; and Oxford, which had shown such promise in her youth, was now sinking into idleness and womb-joy, and doddering in a dishonoured dotage of stagnation and decay." Mere contemporary slang or peculiarity of expression adds nothing to our knowledge of the period. There is no excuse for obscuring the narrative and overburdening the footnotes with mere philological variation or oddity.

The third criticism we have to make, the lack of continuity of the narrative, flows directly from the first two. It is impossible, with the mass of detail in text and reference, much of it archaeological rather than historical, and with the constant sacrifice of normal form to unusual expressions, to obtain a narrative the parts of which fall together in the reader's mind so as to make a completed whole. The impression, as has been said before, is rather that of an encyclopædia than of history. And these characteristics have shown a progressive increase throughout the work, as will be found, for instance, by comparing the account of the Lollard movement in the first volume with the continued discussion of the same subject in the third.

It is true that all these objections are to the form rather than to the substance of the book. Yet they are none the less legitimate. The problem is why this history of an important and hitherto insufficiently known period, written with learning, with critical ability, and with a full use of all available sources, is yet practically unreadable. The solution is to be found in the characteristics mentioned above. The reader has a right to be provided with the results of the historian's study in such a form that they can be read continuously and calmly, with a ready appreciation of the course of events and the influence of institutions. It is respectfully submitted that our usual human limitations make this impossible in the book under review. It is, however, a most useful storehouse of facts which will be made more available when the index is published in the next volume.

A protest might fairly be entered against the price which the publishers ask for the work. From \$3.50 to \$5.00 per volume, the volume being a moderate-sized duodecimo, without illustrations, extra quality of paper or binding, or other source of unusual expense, seems to be a charge so unreasonable and so far beyond the usual prices of books on history as almost to make an American scholar waver in his loyalty to international copyright.

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